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# Cuba seen seeking Soviet OK to declare war on S. Africa

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LONDON — Cuba was reported yesterday to be seeking Soviet approval for a formal declaration of war against South Africa, believing that the time is right for an international crusade to destroy apartheid and to secure Angola, Mozambique and Namibia for Marxism.

The left-of-center Observer newspaper cited the source of its Havana-based reports as a senior Cuban official involved in Havana's representations to Moscow.

Cuba, according to the unnamed official, believes that an all-out war would be less damaging in the long run than the current drawn-out civil strife and guerrilla counter-offensives for the "front line" states, particularly in Angola's debilitating war with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

(UNITA).

"Open war, likely to be fought mainly in Angola, would be destructive and expensive," said the Observer report. "But the Cubans, confident they could win, believe it to be the lesser and shorter evil."

In Washington, the State Department had no comment on the development because officials had not seen the report.

The report was given strength by the paper's correspondent in Luanda, who quoted Angolan government sources as saying the army was planning a new offensive to dislodge UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi from his headquarters at Jamba in southeastern Angola. The ruling MPLA party in Angola is due to hold its annual congress next week, and there are, reportedly, indications that the government wants to demonstrate its authority for the occasion.

Many Cubans reportedly have had their leave canceled, air traffic south from Luanda has increased considerably, and the Angolans are said to be ready to deploy more Cuban and Soviet troops than ever before. Giant Soviet-made Antonov transport aircraft are reported to be landing at Luanda airport from missions to the south almost every 15 minutes.

President Reagan indicated his concern about the situation last Friday when he told a group of journalists that he was considering a covert CIA operation against the Angolan government.

In Geneva, Mr. Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reached no agreement or understanding about the handling of such regional issues as Angola, and there was speculation yesterday that Angola could be the first test of the two leaders' "new relationship."

But the Observer said yesterday that the Cubans are deploying a range of arguments to persuade the Soviets "that a war would lift Soviet and Cuban prestige in the Third World, and with anti-apartheid campaigners. It would make the responses of NATO, EEC and Commonwealth countries look profoundly inadequate."

Even without Soviet support for a full-scale war, the Cubans are said to believe that a substantial step up of military operations against UNITA and the anti-Marxist guerrillas in Mozambique, plus increased aid for leftist guerrillas fighting the South Africans in Namibia, could see a defeat of South African forces. It also would concentrate Western minds on getting the South Africans to quickly dismantle apartheid.

The Cubans admit to four dangers, however, although they have answers for each. According to the Observer, the United States might

break off all negotiations with the Soviets — including those on nuclear disarmament — if such a war were to be conducted. But Cuba is said to answer that Washington's own priorities could not equate the removal of nuclear weapons with the "rollback of the apartheid regime from beyond its borders." Disarmament talks would begin again once peace had been made with a chastened South Africa.

Secondly, the Cubans are said to believe that South Africa would pull out all the military and economic stops against Angola, Mozambique and Namibia, but that again "it was better to pass through a brief fire than a long agony."

Another danger is seen as a U.S. invasion of Cuba, after an ultimatum to Havana to stop waging war on South Africa. The Cubans are said to believe that is unlikely because the Cubans would be universally seen as

taking legitimate action to stop persistent attacks by a rogue South Africa that violates U.N. resolutions and whose agents have been seen on TV around the world whipping and shooting black children.

The last danger is that South Africa could use nuclear weapons against Angola. The Observer said that Cuban intelligence indicates the South Africans do not have such capability — and that is another reason to attack before they do.

Havana reportedly acknowledges, however, that a Soviet veto of its initiative is most likely on this single point, apart from the expense of such a war. Moscow is thought also to be reluctant to approve Cuban commando and bomb attacks inside South Africa, and to arm militant blacks in the townships. Reportedly, the Soviets have a stated intention not to interfere in the internal affairs of South Africa.